



A Study on Reading Habits of Primary School Children in Lhuentse District

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The issue of reading, especially book reading has received much attention from different quarters in recent times because of the downward trend it is experiencing, especially among the young generation. The researcher realized that student's reading culture particularly developing reading habits were observed to be very poor. Students neither acquired skills of reading nor develop habits of reading. These experiences and observations have motivated me to carry out research to enhance reading skills in reading and promote reading habits for children.

This research is to study on Reading Habits of Primary School children under the Lhuentse District. Reading habit and its impact on children of the respondents have been analyzed to find out how reading habit is affected by various elements. Based on the findings of a questionnaires-based survey, the paper also attempts to put forward some suggestions for improving the reading habits of the children.

Keywords: Reading interest; reading materials; gender; social media; reading habits.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reading is an art that provides a human being with the foundation upon which to erect his or her

understanding of life as well as the elements with which to build his or her worldview. Clark and Rumbold (2006) observed that, in addition to personal and mental development, reading is

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critical for ensuring one's access to social, economic, and civic life.

Reading is influenced by culture and home factors before they come to school, all children have extensive exposure to popular culture forms such as music, television, movies, games, toys, and books (as cited in Zangmo, 2002, p.41).

Generally, children in rural areas do not read and this has been a concern for many educators and parents in Bhutan. The concern has been a major subject of talk in many educational forums including workshops, seminars, and Annual Educational Conferences (AEC). Though there is no large-scale research conducted on this issue, an earlier case study (Zangmo, 2002) has shown that reading is mostly done for academic purposes. Zangmo contends, there is no proper motivation given for children to do reading. The only reading for pleasure is once or twice a month where the teacher brings some books and issues to the children; (p.35)

1.1 Statement of the Problem

To examine the effectiveness of Reading Habits of Primary School children in Lhuentse District, and its impact on children readiness at Primary School and its long term effect on the subsequent achievement level of children at Secondary School stage.

1.2 Objectives

The main objective of the study is to ascertain the reading habits of students in the information age. The objectives of the study include the following:

1. What are the reading habits among Primary students?
2. To find out the reading habits of children with respect to:
 - A) Gender
 - B) Location of the school
 - C) Age of the children
3. To ascertain why students engage in reading?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading is considered essential for the overall development of a human being. However, with the advent of modern digital technologies, especially the growing popularity of social

networking on the web, mobile phones, televisions, and other means of entertainment, the reading habit of the general public, especially the younger generation is undergoing decline.

The development of reading habits depends on the skills and techniques of individuals and their love for reading. To establish love and passion for reading and books, children must develop interest. Zangmo (2002) believes interest in reading opens doors for the reader to get engaged.

The other factor responsible for building a reading habit largely depends on motivation.

Colker (2005) (as cited in Zangmo 2002) states, skill makes reading a possibility; motivation makes it a reality (P.36).

The development of reading habits depends on the influence of family, school, culture, community, and individual characteristics (Aebersold & Field, 1997). The author states that families foster a variety of experiences that affects reading. Family members, parents, or adult relatives in the home model reading behaviors, habits, and attitudes.

Yilmaz (2000) discovered that the majority of the students (77.8%) do not possess any reading habits, wherein (8.5%), which is the smallest percentage are heavy readers. Hastings and Henry (2006) in Loan [1] observed that more than half of the students that is (56%) spend less than half an hour a day on reading and (13%) are nonreaders. Also, the downward trend of reading habits of College students was witnessed in the United States of America by a research carried out by National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 2008, it was (51.7%) compared to 1982 with (59.8%).

In all researches, findings revealed that reading habits are connected with students' gender and age. These factors are germane to students' interest in reading. Stenberg (2006) and Ross (2002) in Lane (2012) give an account of females as heavy readers to males. Clark and Foster (2005) reveal that girls enjoy reading greater than boys and most times boys have a negative attitude towards reading. Hassell & Rodge (2007) report females reading for pleasure to male counterparts. Studies also indicate that students hardly read for more than 2 hours a day (Blackwood, 1991).

Also Dipika and Md. Mehedi [2] reveal that most men read newspapers compared to females.

It could therefore be said that the reading habits of students in all the surveys carried out, can be categorized as heavy readers (reading various texts and novels as much as possible and as many times as possible in a month); moderate readers (reading few texts and novels as seem convenient for them); dormant readers (those who liked to read and they regarded themselves readers but did not take time to read regularly and update their knowledge).

2.1 Benefits of Good Reading Habits

Students can invariably improve their reading habits based on the inherent advantages:

1. Good reading habits increase students' reading skills [3].
2. Reading habits widen students' experience and knowledge [4].
3. Good reading habits develop reading speed, fluency, vocabulary, general knowledge, and academic achievement (Cunningham & Stanovich (1998) [5].

3. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey method was used in this study. Samples of 120 children were sampled randomly from various Primary schools in Lhuentse District.

3.1 Research Tools

A structured questionnaire on "Reading Habits among Primary Children was administered consisting of 10 items multiple-choice questions.

3.2 Statistical Techniques

Descriptive statistics Arithmetic Mean, Standard Deviation and percentages are used to interpret data.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The research was conducted in various Primary Schools in Lhuentse District. A structured questionnaire has been designed to collect the data from the children.

Table 1 Show that students are interested in reading. 93(77.5%) students are interested in reading. Only 12(10%) students indicated that

they are not interested in reading. 10 (8.3%) are in the margin and 5(4.1% are not at all interested in reading.

Table 2 Show that 38(31.6%) students enjoy reading very much. 48(40%) students enjoying reading. Only 29(24.1%) students indicated just okay. 5(4.1%) are not at all enjoy reading.

Table 3 Show that students read stories the most 90(75%). It could be that the moral of the stories arouse interest to read. 15(12.5%) students read magazines other than new papers and comics.

Table 4 Shows that the majority of the respondents 74(61.6%) read a book for a half-hour while 26(21.6%) read a book for 15 minutes. Only 20 (16.6%) students read books for 1 hour.

Table 5 Does not offer an encouraging finding, because only 15(12.5%) students visit Library every day. On the other hand, the number of students 94(78.3%) who visit the library once a week is also not very discouraging and 11(9.16%) go to the Library occasionally.

Table 6 shows that the reasons for students to visit the school library. Many of the students visit the library to borrow library materials 85(70.83%). 15(12.5%) visit to use the internet and reading newspapers 20(16.6%).

Table 7 shows that students read books not only to prepare for exams or acquire knowledge but also for some other reasons. The largest number of respondents 76(63.3%) indicated that they read to develop reading habits in their life. This was followed by having a fun 10(8.3%) and getting a job 18 (15%)

Table 8 shows that 93 (77.5) students find it interesting to read from printed books followed by reading from computers 22(18.3%). Only 5 students (4.1) are preferred to read from tablets and smart phones.

Table 9 shows that the highest number of respondents 66(55%) believe that engaging in playing sports and games arouse their interest is the single factor followed by lack of interesting reading materials 27(22.5%). Unavailability of books has been mentioned by 20(16.6%) students, while TV watching 7(5.85) has also been cited as a negative factor. The reading habit is on the decline especially among the younger generation for a variety of reasons.

Table 1. Interested in reading

Interested in Reading	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	93	77.5%
No	12	10%
Can't say	10	8.3%
Not at all	05	4.1%
Total	120	100%

Table 2. Enjoyment in reading

Enjoyment in Reading	Respondents	Percentage
Very much	38	31.6%
Enjoyable	48	40%
Just okay	29	24.1%
Not at all	05	4.1%
Total	120	100%

Table 3. Types of books read

Types of Reading Materials	Respondents	Percentage
Newspapers	08	6.6%
Magazine	15	12.5%
Story	90	75%
Comics	07	8.4%
Total	120	100%

Table 4. Length of book reading

Length of book Reading	Respondents	Percentage
15 minutes	26	21.6%
Half an hour	74	61.6%
1 hour	20	16.6%
Total	120	100%

Table 5. Frequency of Library visit

Frequency of Library visit	Respondents	Percentage
Every day	15	12.5%
Once a week	94	78.3%
Occasionally	11	9.16%
Total	120	100%

Table 6. Purpose of Library visit

Purpose of the Library visit	Respondents	Percentage
To borrow library materials	85	70.83%
To use internet	15	12.5%
To read newspapers	20	16.6
Total	120	100%

Table 7. Purpose of Reading

Purpose of Reading	Respondents	Percentage
To pass the Examination	16	13.3%
To develop reading habits	76	63.3%
To have fun	18	15%
To get job	10	8.3%
Total	120	100%

Table 8. Reading format

Reading format	Respondents	Percentage
Reading from a print	93	77.5%
Reading from computer	22	18.3%
Reading from tablet/Smartphone	05	4.1%
Total	120	100%

Table 9. Obstacle for reading

Obstacle for reading	Respondents	Percentage
Lack of interesting books	27	22.5%
Unavailability of books	20	16.6%
Watching television	07	5.8%
Playing sports/games	66	55%
Total	120	100%

Table 10. Support to develop reading habits

Support to develop reading Habits	Respondents	Percentage
Parents	24	20%
Friends	39	32.5%
Teachers	53	44.1%
Liberian	04	3.3%
Total	120	100%

Table 11. Independent variables and dependent variables

Independent variables	Dependent variable
Gender Boys Girls	Reading Habits
Location Rural Urban	
Age 10-12 years 13-16 years	

Table 12. Comparison in respect to gender

Gender	Number	Mean	SD	MD	't'
Boys	62	63.2	2.45	7.5	4.13
Girls	58	55.7	1.98		

Significant at 0.05 levels

Table 13. Comparisons between rural and urban location

Location	Number	Mean	SD	MD	't'
Rural	96	71.43	5.67	15.26	8.19
Urban	24	55.17	3.49		

Significant at 0.05 levels

Table 14. Comparisons in respect to Age

Age Group	Number	Mean	SD	MD	't'
10-12 years	89	68.91	1.45	2.60	3.97
13-16 years	31	71.51	1.91		

Significant at 0.05 levels

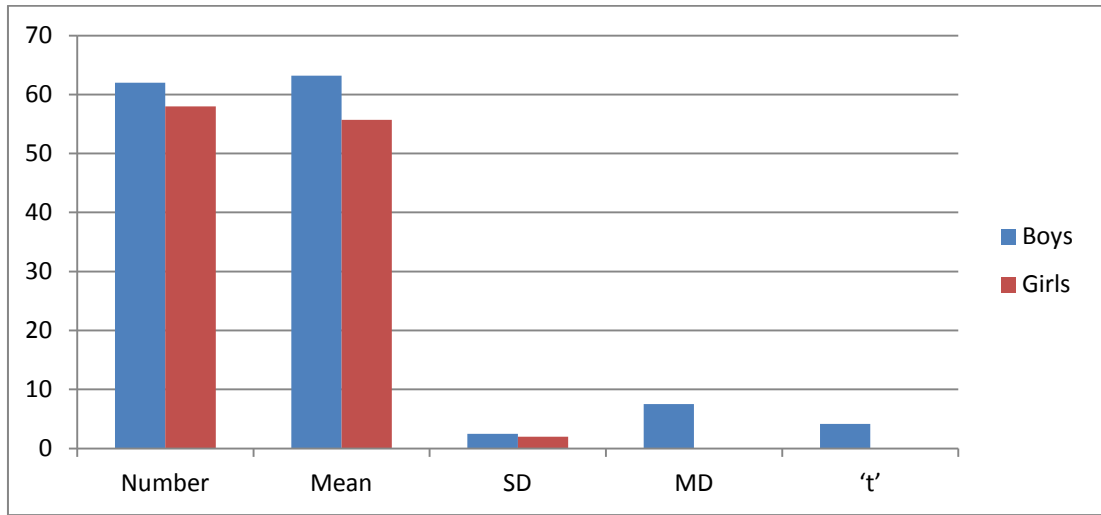


Fig. 1. Comparisons in respect to gender

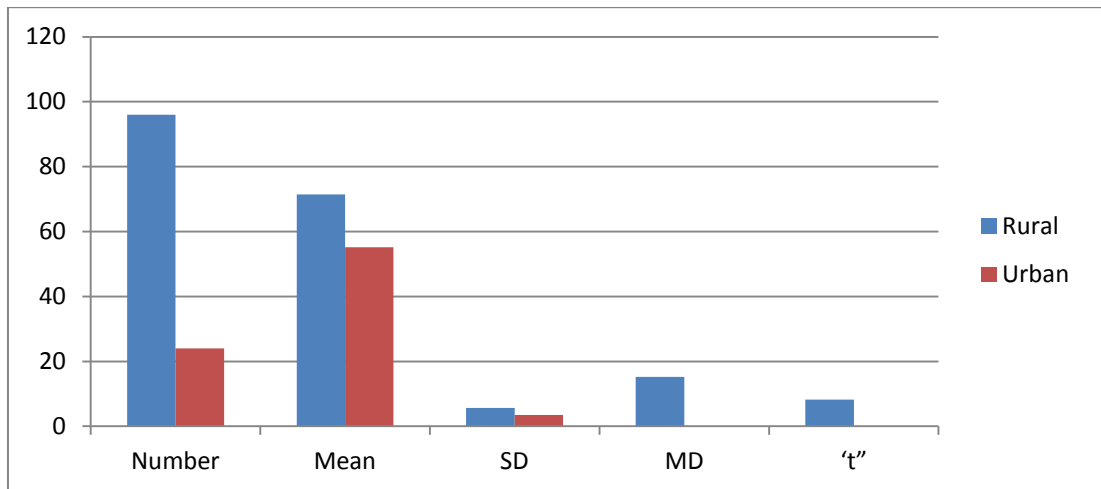


Fig. 2. Comparisons between rural and urban location

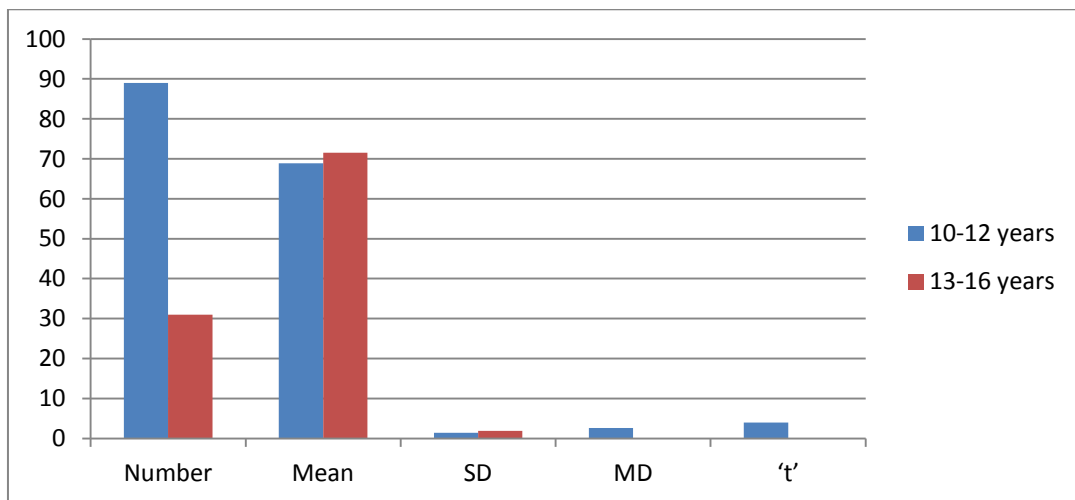


Fig. 3. Comparisons in respect to age

Table 10 Shows that the teacher is considered the highest 53(44.1) for providing help to children in reading followed by friends 39(3.5%). 24(20%) children responded getting help from parents and 4(3.3%) from Liberians.

The above table indicates that 't' value 4.13 is greater than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. There is significant difference between boys and girls. Hence, null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The above graph shows that number, mean, standard deviation and mean deviation of children in respect to their reading habits by gender.

The above table indicates that 't' value 8.19 is greater than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. There is significant difference between rural and urban children. Hence, null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The above graph shows that number, mean, standard deviation and mean deviation of children in respect to their reading habits by location.

The above table indicates that 't' value 3.97 is greater than the table value at 0.05 level of significance. There is significant difference between 10-12 year age group children and 13-16 year age group children. Hence, null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis is accepted.

The above graph shows that number, mean, standard deviation and mean deviation of children in respect to their reading habits by age.

5. CONCLUSION

The study revealed that the reading habit among primary children in Lhuentse is encouraging. However, there is the need for students to read more of magazine and news papers in order to boost their vocabulary. Students should make the library their first point of call to get updated from time to time. Also, it was inferred that half of the respondents love stories books followed by magazines and periodicals. This can be encouraged children to experience all round development in their academics.

6. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The students read books and other materials with a sense of purpose and with specific targets not aimlessly or fun. Most students feel that they need to read because reading gives them a way to develop their reading habits and keep abreast of the changing times.
2. Reading materials, especially books should be constant companions to all people, especially students. However, in his respect, the finding of the survey is not very heartening, because only a small percentage of the students read books for less than fifteen minutes a day. The majority of the students read books for at least more than half-hour a day.
3. Reading habits and library use are closely interlinked. It is widely assumed that one of the main indicators of the decline in pupil's reading habits is the fact that the number of people visiting libraries is also decreasing worldwide. Although this is not supported by reliable statistics, it could be inferred that because of the prevalence of digital technologies and various means of entertainment, young people feel less enthusiastic about library visits. However, the survey findings show that a high percentage of primary students visit the school library at least once a week.
4. Most of the students surveyed have indicated that stories books are of their choice. It shows that the students prefer to read stories books compare to other reading materials due to the moral of the stories arouse interest to read.
5. The highest number of students believe that engaging in playing games and sports arouse their interest is the single factor followed by lack of interesting reading materials in the school. While TV watching has also been cited as a negative factor. The reading habit is on the decline especially among the younger generation for a variety of reasons.

6.1 Finding Pertaining to the gender Variable

The survey revealed that boys had better reading habits compared to that of girls. The reason could be boys are interested in reading different kinds of books and news papers.

6.2 Finding Pertaining to the location Variable

When place of studying is taken into consideration, rural students have more problems in any aspect like reading materials and other reading facilities.

6.3 Finding Pertaining to the Variable Age

From the analysis of the data, children with age between 10-12 year ages have poor reading habits comparing to the children age between 13-16 years. The possible reasons could be due to lack of reading skills and not developed reading habits as they are small.

7. SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE READING HABITS OF STUDENTS

Improving the reading habits of the students and turning them into lifelong learners is quite important for building a knowledge society. Reading is essential because it equips people with the necessary knowledge and understanding. Based on the finding of this study, the following suggestions are made to improve the reading habits of the younger generation in particular and people from all cross-sections of life in general.

1. The role of teachers and parents in improving the reading habits of students cannot be overemphasized. They can do these in many ways, but most importantly creating examples of themselves. The more they read in front of young people, the more they will be able to instill the love for reading in the heart of young people.
2. Library visits and people's reading habits are closely interlinked. That is why libraries should be developed to attract young people. At present, few libraries have Internet facilities. If these facilities could be strengthened even more, the younger generation will find another reason for visiting libraries.
3. Schools should regularly organize events like debates, clubs, and essay and quiz competitions to inspire students to gather

knowledge and make their marks in these events. In this way, the reading habits of students will improve.

4. Since students' reading habit is decline, partnership and collaboration between publisher, booksellers, schools teachers and the larger cross-sections of students should be promoted in earliest.
5. "Reading week" or "Reading month" could be planned which reading among various groups of students could be encouraged by giving awards and recognition. Besides, massive awareness-raising campaigns could be undertaken, which would create critical consciousness among local communities, thus encourage students to read.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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